

FACT SHEET: The Coltsville National Historical Park Act – Sec. 3032 of HR 3979

What is Coltsville? Coltsville was the Hartford, Connecticut home of Samuel Colt's industrial enterprise- the Colt Fire Arms Company. In Hartford, Colt manufactured his iconic revolver that not only transformed the industry but was a major contributor to the industrial revolution by pioneering the use of interchangeable parts and precision manufacturing. Within the 260 acre site existed a fully-integrated industrial community that included: armories where manufacturing took place; worker housing; the home of Samuel & Elizabeth Colt; and community amenities such as a church, a public park, botanical gardens, a social hall, a beer garden, and a library. Coltsville was active as a site for manufacturing from 1855 until 1994. Most of the structures - including the iconic blue dome of the East Armory - remain intact. The site was designated a National Historic Landmark in 2008.

Why should Coltsville be a National Park? Samuel Colt developed the use of interchangeable parts, the assembly line, and highly mechanized techniques that set the stage for mass production of the bicycle, the typewriter, the automobile, and the jet engine. No unit that is presently in the National Park System fully interprets the type precision manufacturing that was pioneered at Coltsville. Coltsville is a part of our national, and Connecticut's, manufacturing DNA. It is a readily identifiable and cohesive 260 acre site that is worthy of preservation, interpretation, and management by the National Park Service with broad support from all levels of government and community organizations. As a National Park, Coltsville will further become an economic development tool for the city of Hartford and will provide Connecticut with proper representation in our National Park System.

What does the Coltsville National Historical Park Act do?

The Coltsville National Historical Park Act (H.R. 1259/S.615) is known as an 'authorization bill', a common and important step in the establishment of other National Parks nationwide. As an authorization bill, the establishment of a National Park at Coltsville is contingent upon meeting the conditions set out in the legislation as well as the development of a management plan and funding from federal and non-federal sources.

Once the Secretary of the Interior determines the following three conditions spelled out in the legislation have been met, The Coltsville National Historical Park Act would authorize the establishment of a new unit of the National Park System within the Coltsville Historic District - known as the "Coltsville National Historical Park":

- 1) The National Park Service has acquired an interest in sufficient land to constitute a manageable unit
- 2) The National Park Service has acquired at least 10,000 square feet within the East Armory for park administration and visitor services
- 3) The National Park Service has entered into a written agreement with the proper public entity(s) providing that land owned by those entities within the Coltsville Historic District shall be managed in consistent with the park

The National Park Service (NPS) shall complete a management plan within three years after federal funds are made available and shall consult with the Advisory Commission. The Congressional Budget Office's estimates the cost of implementation to be \$9 million from 2015-2019 with operating costs of less than \$1 million annually thereafter. Other provisions in the legislation of note include:

- The NPS is authorized to provide technical assistance and public interpretation within the boundaries of the historic district.
- The NPS is authorized to acquire land or interests in land by donation, purchase with appropriated or donated funds, or exchange. Land may not be acquired via condemnation.
- The NPS is authorized to enter into cooperative agreements in order to identify, interpret, restore, rehabilitate, and provide technical assistance for the preservation of national significant properties within the boundaries of the park.
- The NPS may enter into written agreements with entities such as the Connecticut State Library, the Colt Trust, or the Wadsworth Atheneum to gain access to Colt-related artifacts.
- Federal funds must be matched 1-1 by non-federal funds. Matching funds may be in the form of fairly-valued donated property, goods, or services.

What would the Coltsville National Historical Park look like?

The Coltsville National Park Visitor Experience Study - published in 2008 by the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation - is a guidebook for development of a park with three different scenarios, scaled for funding and availability of resources.

In the full site scenario - comprised of 10,000 square feet in the East Armory and an additional 5,000 square feet in the East Armory for interpretive and educational programming - visitors would have access to all four levels of the historic East Armory, where much of the firearm manufacturing took place. It would include:

- An extensive contact station and an interpretive exhibit with artifacts from the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art and the Connecticut State Museum.
- A Colt Manufacturing Multimedia Experience modeled after the Flour Tower at the Mill City Museum in Minneapolis. Visitors would be seated in a freight elevator stopping at four floors of the factory. At each floor doors would open and multimedia recreations would represent activities on each of the manufacturing floors without having to dedicate large sections of each floor to the visitor experience. The multimedia techniques would allow visitors to learn about firearm manufacturing, Samuel and Elizabeth Colt and hear oral histories from employees.
- A 2,500-square foot fourth-floor Colt gallery and observation area would provide interpretive panels and a view over the Coltsville Historic District. It would include implementation of a Cultural Landscape Master Plan that would make the entire Coltsville Historic District inviting and walkable along with physical linkages and complementary experiences at the Riverfront and the Botanical Garden in Colt Park.

The facilities would be open daily throughout the year with on-site National Park Service staff. It is estimated this will attract 200,000 annual visitors.

Where did this idea come from and how has it moved through Congress?

The 'Coltsville Ad Hoc Committee' - a group of government, nonprofit, and private sector stakeholders - has for years worked to develop support for a National Park at Coltsville. In 2003, Former Senator Dodd and Representative Larson introduced the Coltsville Study Act. The Act was signed into law that year, authorizing the National Park Service to study whether it should be included as a unit in the National Park System.

With the help of state funding, a Visitor Experience Study was commissioned that developed detailed scenarios of how the site could be managed as an NPS unit. In 2009, the National Park Service releases the Special Resource Study and determined that Coltsville is both nationally significant and suitable for National Park designation. In 2010, Senator Dodd and Representative Larson first introduced the National Historical Park Act. The bill was voted on in the full House, receiving a majority of the votes, but failed to reach the two-thirds necessary to pass under suspension of the rules.

The bill was then reintroduced in 2011. While the National Park Service testified in favor of designating Coltsville a National Historical Park that year, no new National Park designations occurred during the 112th Congress. In 2014, Representative Larson and Senator Blumenthal again reintroduced the bill. Hearings were held in both the Senate ENR & House Natural Resources Committees, being favorably reported out of House Natural Resources by unanimous consent.

By the end of 2014, the Act passed both the full House and Senate before heading to the President's desk.